

LEVEL ONE PIAAC 2023 Switzerland

Adults with low literacy skills in Switzerland

Switzerland participated in PIAAC in 2023 for the first time. Therefore, no time comparisons are available.

In Switzerland, the percentage of adults who are at low levels of German, French, or Italian literacy (PIAAC Level 1 or below) is 20 percent in 2023. About a third of adults with low literacy skills (35%) is 55-65 years of age, the largest age group in the analysis. The proportions of males and females among adults with low literacy were at similar levels.

In 2023, 59 percent of adults with low literacy skills were born outside of Switzerland, and 58 percent also had parents born outside of Switzerland. Among adults with low skills, 49 percent had a native language other than German, French, or Italian.

Adults with low skills most frequently reported having a secondary degree (47%), with 38 percent having achieved a degree lower than secondary. Similar percentages of adults with low skills had parents with secondary degrees (46%), as with below secondary degrees (41%).

Three in four adults with low skills (74%) were employed. Of the currently and recently employed adults with low skills, 16 percent were in elementary occupations and 25 percent in semi-skilled blue-collar occupations.

The proportion of low-skilled adults participating in non-formal education was 25 percent, and that of those acquiring formal qualifications was 9 percent.

Three in five adults with low skills (76%) reported excellent or good health.

About two in five adults with low literacy (43%) say that most people could be trusted (social trust). Those with higher levels of literacy (Level 2 or above) have higher levels of social trust (63%) and political efficacy (64%). Forty two percent (42%) of adults with low literacy skills and 64 percent of adults with high literacy skills report having a say in what the government does.

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CHE Table A-3. Percentage distribution of adults in **Switzerland** ages 16 to 65 overall and with proficiency level 1 or below (adults with low skills) and level 2 or above (adults with middle or high skills), by demographic and personal characteristics: 2023

	Total, all adults		2023			
Characteristic	2023		Level 1 or below		Level 2 or above	
All adults	100,0	†	19,8	(0,67)	80,2	(0,67)
Age						
16-24	14,4	(0,16)	7,0	(1,13)	16,3	(0,33)
25-34	19,7	(0,27)	11,5	(1,19)	21,8	(0,44)
35-44	21,6	(0,45)	22,6	(1,62)	21,4	(0,52)
45-54	20,5	(0,59)	23,7	(1,85)	19,7	(0,64)
55-65	23,7	(0,40)	35,2	(1,90)	20,9	(0,58)
Gender						
Male	50,6	(0,12)	51,9	(2,02)	50,3	(0,49)
Female	49,4	(0,12)	48,1	(2,02)	49,7	(0,49)
Language: German, French und Italian						
Non-native	22,4	(0,53)	48,5	(1,87)	15,9	(0,61)
Native	77,6	(0,53)	51,5	(1,87)	84,1	(0,61)
Nativity status						
Born in Switzerland	67,1	(0,46)	40,9	(1,80)	73,5	(0,61)
Born outside of Switzerland	32,9	(0,46)	59,1	(1,80)	26,5	(0,61)
Immigrant status						
Foreign-born of foreign-born parents	31,2	(0,42)	57,7	(1,77)	24,6	(0,59)
Foreign-born of mixed heritage	1,2	(0,15)	1,0	! (0,40)	1,3	(0,16)
Foreign-born of native-born parents	0,6	(0,11)	!!	!!	0,6	(0,13)
Native-born of foreign-born parents	9,0	(0,43)	8,3	(1,23)	9,2	(0,54)
Native-born of mixed heritage	10,2	(0,44)	4,6	(0,72)	11,6	(0,52)
Native-born of native-born parents	47,8	(0,57)	28,0	(1,47)	52,7	(0,72)
Educational attainment						
Less than secondary	16,8	(0,17)	37,5	(1,71)	11,7	(0,45)

[illegible]

Not participated	79,2	(0,42)	90,9	(1,36)	76,3	(0,53)
Participated	20,8	(0,42)	9,1	(1,36)	23,7	(0,53)
Non-formal education in the last 12 months						
Not participated	54,0	(0,74)	74,9	(1,93)	48,7	(0,86)
Participated	46,0	(0,74)	25,1	(1,93)	51,3	(0,86)
Formal or Non-formal education in the last 12 months						
Not participated	43,7	(0,64)	69,3	(2,10)	37,4	(0,78)
Participated	56,3	(0,64)	30,7	(2,10)	62,6	(0,78)

† Not applicable.

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

!! Not reportable. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is 50 percent or above.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Educational attainment is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011, grouped into below upper secondary (ISCED 1, 2 and 3 short), upper secondary (ISCED 3 and 4) and tertiary (ISCED 5, 6, 7 and 8). Occupation skill-level is based on an OECD measure that classifies occupations into four broad skill-levels: (1) skilled occupations (e.g. legislators, senior officials and managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals); (2) semi-skilled white-collar occupations (e.g. clerks, service workers, and shop and market sales workers); (3) semi-skilled blue-collar occupations (e.g. skilled agricultural and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers); and (4) elementary occupations (e.g. cleaners, kitchen assistants) (OECD 2013). Social Trust was asked in a question: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please answer using this card, where 0 means 'you can't be too careful' and 10 mean 'Most people can be trusted'. The estimation here divides the scale into 0-5 as Disagree and 6-10 as Agree. Political efficacy was asked in a question: How much would you say the political system in #CountryName allows people like you to have a say in what the government does? Please answer using this card, where 0 means 'not at all' and 10 means 'completely'. The estimation here divides the scale into 0-5 as Disagree and 6-10 as Agree. The way non-formal education participation was asked in 2012 may have facilitated over-reporting, therefore caution is requested when interpreting the trend results.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), 2012 and 2023.